

Council OKs pension, trash plans

By RON NISSIMOV

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City Council on Wednesday approved Mayor Bill White's plan to deputize city employees to issue trash citations and OK'd his proposal to use the city's convention center hotel as collateral on a \$300 million payment with interest to the Municipal Employees Pension System.

Council members praised White for the steps he has taken to reduce illegal dumping. "We have been a reactionary city (in stopping illegal dumping), but we need to be a proactive city," said Councilwoman Carol Mims Galloway. "This ordinance is a start."

Zero tolerance on trash

The city had relied on HPD officers and 60 inspectors to issue trash citations, but White did not feel that was adequate. The 300 employees who have been trained to issue citations come from eight departments, said Anthony Hall, the city's chief administrative officer. Under White's "zero-tolerance policy," residents who place heavy trash on their curbsides too early will be issued citations ranging from \$50 to \$2,000, depending on whether they are repeat violators. But city officials have said they will try to resolve matters through discussions rather than issuing citations, if appropriate. To better coordinate enforcement of illegal dumping, the council also approved moving the city's Neighborhood Protection Division from the Planning and Development Department to HPD.

Without any discussion, council members approved the proposal to use the Hilton Americas-Houston Hotel as collateral to the Houston Municipal Employees' Pension System.

The council approved a plan Sept. 1 to reduce a \$2 billion shortfall in the pension system to about \$850 million. The hotel deal was part of that agreement, but White had said he would present it to the council when details were completed.